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ABSTRACT

In fall 1983, work began on the development of a new transfer program at the Community College of Philadelphia. The process began with the replacement of the typical set of introductory courses with a 12-hour curricular unit in which the lectures, readings and other activities were coherently integrated. An "Introduction to Social Science" course would serve as the first offering of the new Transfer Education program. The program combined curriculum and staff development activities designed to ground students in the concepts, vocabulary, and methods of the social sciences, and to prepare long-time faculty members to rethink their pedagogical goals and procedures. The staff development component centered on writing across the curriculum, faculty mentoring, and seminar work, while a main program element involved the integration of writing into the intellectual agenda of the program. In January 1984, the program began with two sections of students taking the initial "Introduction to Social Science" semester. Later, in spring 1984, a faculty group from the Humanities Division began a planning process to construct the curriculum for the second "Introduction to Humanities" semester. The program not only received enthusiastic response from faculty, but it resulted in high rates of student satisfaction accompanied by lower rates of attrition for students of the program. Problems that remain to be solved include a continuing need to reorient faculty in terms of their goals and the pedagogical process; the need to develop a more integrated college curriculum; ways to include part-time students in the program; ways of improving counseling support; ways to improve articulation with four-year institutions; and ways of institutionalizing the program. (HB)

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# Report to the Ford Foundation
# Urban Transfer Opportunities Program
# Transfer Education Program
# Community College of Philadelphia

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Project Director

May 30, 1984

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During the Fall semester of 1983 the Project Director and the Director of the FIS:Honors Program, in collaboration with the appropriate Division Directors identified faculty members to participate in the construction and teaching of the first "Introduction to Social Science" semester of the new transfer program named the Transfer Education Program. This group of faculty included two from Sociology, two from Psychology, one from Anthropology and two composition teachers.

During the semester this group met regularly and, under the supervision of the Project Director and the Honors Program Director, began the work of constructing the new curriculum and developing the skills necessary to work with students in this new setting. The stated goal was to replace the typical set of introductory courses with a 12 hour curricular unit in which the lectures, readings and other activities were coherently integrated. These activities combined both curriculum development and staff development since the objective was to both formulate a curricular unit which effectively grounded the students in the concepts, vocabularies, methods and concerns of the social sciences and to initiate a process which prepared long-time faculty members at the college to rethink their pedagogical goals and procedures and to relate to students in unfamiliar ways.

The curricular component of the semester-long activities involved weekly meetings of the entire faculty group and more frequent meetings of small numbers of faculty as they attempted

to break through the strictures of the traditional introductory course.

The staff development component centered on helping the faculty develop the competencies and attitudes necessary to develop the elements of the program that were considered most important in adequately preparing students for transfer. These centered on writing-across-the-curriculum, faculty mentoring and seminar work.

We considered the ability to write as a central attribute of the educated person and critical to the adequate preparation of students and believed that to make writing central to the program it should be taught by all faculty members. Therefore, during the Fall semester conversations were initiated which included extended discussions of the goals of the writing program, alternative models of writing-across-the-curriculum and group examination of selected student papers. To fully integrate the writing into the intellectual agenda of the program there were also extended conversations about appropriate writing topics and the sequencing of writing assignments.

Since the program was based on the premise that the failure of the transfer function at the college was partly due to the limited contact between many students and the faculty, a mentoring component was also planned. A counselor was designated as part of the faculty team and, under his supervision, faculty were prepared to work closely with selected students. The goal was for each student in the program to have an identified faculty member available for frequent discussion as well as a counselor

to help with more detailed questions concerning transfer options, financial aid and related matters.

The final component of staff development involved the preparation of faculty to assume seminar responsibilities in addition to lecturing. Teachers at this college, like most community colleges, have tended over the years toward the lecture/discussion as their primary pedagogical approach, along with textbooks as the primary reading assigned to students. Because of this we considered seminars an essential compliment to lectures so that students could be introduced to the close reading of major texts and the related academic norms of inquiry, examination and discussion. However, the faculty had to be prepared to teach texts as opposed to "delivering information" through lectures and appropriate works had to be selected.

During the Fall a variety of administrative tasks were undertaken in preparation for beginning the new transfer program during the Spring semester. The pool of potential transfer students was identified, defined as new, full-time day students whose entrance tests qualified them for the regular curriculum and basic composition and who stated an interest in continuing their education in a four-year institution. Admission and registration procedures were established so that entering students fitting the profile of the transfer pool could be identified and registered for the new program. Arrangements were also made with the college's largest remedial program, Project II, to register students interested in transfer after they completed the exit requirements of the program. This was done to

help insure that students at the college who entered with skill deficiencies but demonstrated the ability to do college level work would be given continued support and assistance. The Office of Institutional Research agreed to conduct a longitudinal study of the students in the program to measure their transfer success.

Two sections of the new program were placed on the college's schedule so that the students could be block scheduled. The college provided a dedicated classroom for the exclusive use of the program and a room for seminars. Additional program office and faculty office space was provided so that students in the program would have a common space to talk with each other and the faculty during their free periods. We assumed that this physical arrangement would help increase the sense of common membership and participation in a learning community.

In January 1984 the program began with two sections of students taking the initial "Introduction to Social Science" semester taught by the two faculty teams who had participated in the planning activities of the previous semester. During the Spring semester the social science teams continued to meet weekly with the Project Director and the Honors Program Director to both monitor the activities of the program and to make modifications in the assignments and schedule. This helped to maintain the intellectual coherence of the program and to identify problem areas. The Project Director visited various lectures and seminars and the composition teacher coordinated the writing program, sat in on individual writing groups and assisted the faculty in conducting the writing-across-the-curriculum.

During the Spring 1984 semester a second group of faculty drawn from the Humanities Division was also assembled and, like the first group, began a semester-long planning process to construct the curriculum for the second "Introduction to the Humanities" semester. This team was to develop a 12 credit curricular unit which included the same structure and processes--a mix of lectures and seminars, writing groups, faculty mentoring and the reading of primary texts. The two semesters were conceived as the student's foundational year, preparing them to continue in whichever area of interest they chose to pursue. The Humanities team had the additional task of developing an integrated program which combined performance with the critical and historical approach to the humanities. This goal was reflected in the composition of the team which included faculty with expertise in literature, drama, film, art history, philosophy and social history. This team followed a similar process of weekly group meetings and more frequent smaller meetings. They are now finalizing the curriculum and will continue to meet during the summer.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF PROGRAM

During the grant period the project realized its goals of curriculum development and initial faculty development. Faculty members from both the Social Sciences ands Humanities Divisions engaged in developing integrated, 12 hour curricular units designed to serve as the first year of the new Transfer Education Program. The first "Introduction to Social Science" semester was offered during the Spring 1984 semester and the second,

"Introduction to the Humanities" semester will be offered during the Fall 1984 semester. By Fall 1984 the first year of the proposed two year sequence will be fully in place at the college, with both semesters in operation taught by four faculty teams.

Any evaluation of the program at this point must be somewhat sketchy and impressionistic, but there are several indications of initial success. The faculty has been quite enthusiastic, meeting on their own time and putting considerable work in the development and teaching of the program. The students also report a high degree of satisfaction with the initial semester and have had measurably lower rates of attrition than the general student body at the college. English department faculty members not involved in the transfer program were involved in grading the student's writing to determine their final grade and and reported that their writing competence was also considerably higher than the average student body.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

The project has been valuable both through the opportunity it has provided to engage in extensive faculty and curriculum development and in helping identify the institutional problems in preparing students for transfer. While they could not all be addressed during the project's first year, our increased understanding of the specific problems in enhancing the college's transfer function will help guide our actions over the next several years. The major areas of concern include:

1. Faculty Development. While significant progress has been made over the past year, this appears as the major problem

to be addressed. The majority of our faculty, as in many community colleges, has been at the institution for a number of years, primarily teaching remedial and introductory courses. If we are to construct a program which successfully prepares students for transfer then the faculty must be reoriented both in terms of their goals and sense of pedagogical processes.

We see faculty development as at least a several year process. We plan to have each team meet regularly during the semester following the first time they teach the course to review what has been done and to further develop the skills needed to teach in this way. Additionally, techniques of peer evaluation need to be implemented. To a certain extent the curricular structure molds teaching styles but faculty have an inevitable tendency to draft toward older patterns.

As expected it was much easier to achieve rough consensus among the Social Science faculty than among the Humanities teachers on the issue of how to represent their respective subject matters. After the Social Science faculty moved from an informational model of instruction to a cognitive and conceptual one there were relatively few disputes about what ought to be taught. The Humanities faculty, though, had a different experience. At least three powerful, competing visions of the Humanities exist there--the humanities as creative and expressive; as intellectual history; and as critical and analytical modes of understanding. Much discussion is still required before final agreement is achieved concerning the way in which the humanities will be presented and the implications of that representation for the preparation of transfer students.

2. Curriculum Development. We are attempting to develop a much more integrated curriculum than currently exists at the college. We still see the importance of this in adequately preparing students but appreciate how time consuming the effort is. Both semesters of the foundational year need to be closely observed over the next several years before we can expect the curriculum to be fully coherent.

We believe we have been successful in integrating the writing into the curriculum and in having it support the intellectual agenda of the program. However, we have found it much more difficult to integrate mathematics and quantitative reasoning. We have had extensive discussions with the mathematics faculty, but much clarifying still needs to be done. The bulk of our students enter with very poor math skills, and with quite negative attitudes toward the discipline. Our current discussion of the problems centers around the best approach to be taken. For example, with regard to non-science students, should we help them gain a "reading knowledge" of math as opposed to developing their ability to produce it? Should we try to improve their math ability through a series of courses throughout the four semesters, a concentrated experience during a specific semester, or by integrating quantitative reasoning throughout the entire curriculum?

We are also in the process of clarifying the nature of the second year interdisciplinary seminars. We view their role as continuing the agenda of the foundation year, especially with regard to the reading of major texts and a concentration on

writing, as students also take coursework in their major areas of interest.

3. Part-Time Students. The initial grant has concentrated exclusively on full-time day students. However, if the program is to have major impact on the college, something must be designed for part-time students as well. One possibility we are considering is the creation of several linked courses, sliced from the larger curricular units, which could achieve part of the agenda of the integrated semesters. These 6 hour experiences, coupled with intensive counseling, may help improve the transfer prospects of our many part-time students.

4. Need for Counseling Support. The Counseling Department has tended to see the Transfer Education Program as one transfer program among many at the college. Career programs, they insist, double successfully as transfer programs for students. We have come to see this as a critical problem since the counseling staff powerfully represent the college to incoming students, shaping their sense of options and the appropriate steps to transfer. We have had a counselor associated with the program but plan to work much more extensively with the entire staff over the next year.

5. Articulation with Four-Year Institutions. The college already has articulation agreements with a number of receiving institutions in the area. However, we see the need to forge tighter links with them and so are now forming an advisory group to the program composed of senior administrators from four-year institutions. We anticipate that this group will both provide helpful advice for our program and identify problems that our students encounter.

6. Institutionalization of Program. An expanded program could involve a considerable number of students at the college. We have begun discussions with appropriate academic officers and standing committees to consider the various ways that the program could be institutionalized. Two possibilities are the modification of the existing Associate in Arts or Associate in General Studies curricula. We anticipate a two to three year process before the program is institutionalized in a final form. Our experience during this past year, though, has indicated the need for the college to reconsider the transfer function in a comprehensive manner, including the nature of our advertising, the identification of the transfer pool, counseling, and admission and registration procedures. The college's new president has incorporated these concerns in the charge to several new institutional agenda task forces she has created and we anticipate a number of recommendations which will highlight the institutional changes that must be made to improve the preparation of students for transfer.

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